

Ћирилица из нот дед: Cyrillic Script from a Sociolinguistic Perspective in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia

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1. Introduction

During 2012 and 2013 the question of script use in Serbia, specifically, the fact that Latin script prevails in public use, moved into the spotlight of public discussion, especially in multicultural Novi Sad (Salamurović 2015). After several months-long debates over scripts used on the building of the Center for Culture in Novi Sad, on bus displays and other public facilities, one creative citizen was obviously motivated to express their revolt by posting the following graffiti: Ћирилица из нот дед (“Cyrillics is not dead”), transcribing parts of English text into Serbian using the Cyrillic alphabet. On the other hand, in his current typological study on biscriptality in Slavic and non-Slavic languages, Slavist Daniel Bunčić proclaims in aphoristic form: “Monoscriptality can be cured - learn Cyrillic!” (Bunčić 2016a:16)² emphasizing an additional value of learning and using the Cyrillic script. Besides both statements relating to Cyrillic script, they also have the common trait that they assign particular attitudes and values to the script. Those socio-cultural attributions are one of the most important features of the script and are of primary importance in selecting the script within biscriptal situations. Moreover, they are of particular interest for language policy and sociolinguistics of script.

This paper will examine the current status of Cyrillic script in three South-Slavic countries: Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia³, the first two being biscriptal in the sense of what Bunčić typologically describes as bigraphism (one language using two scripts, Bunčić 2016c:54), and the last, Macedonia, being typologically monoscriptal but still dealing with two different scripts. In order to answer the main research question – what is the status of Cyrillic script in those three countries – the analysis will encompass participants in public communication relevant for the script use on macro and micro-levels. In doing so, we will consider both

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² The original aphorism relates to monolingualism and was used to promote the learning of foreign languages.

³ In February 2019, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia officially changed its name to the Republic of North Macedonia. We will refer in this article to the state using toponym “Macedonia” alternatively, since the research was conducted before the state name was changed.

institutions dealing with language policy and planning and those agents who implement the codified instructions of script use, that is, media, other institutions such as the church, cultural facilities, and last but not least, script users (citizens). This part of the research is based on a survey conducted among residents of these countries.

The goal of the analysis is to indicate 1) semiotic values of the Cyrillic script in these countries after the disintegration of the common Serbo-Croatian language area and 2) mutual influences of the use of scripts and the latest crucial political changes (Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001 in Macedonia, Independence of Montenegro in 2006 and the political changes after the Elections in Serbia in 2012).

The case study to follow is situated within the framework of the sociolinguistics of script which will be presented in the next section. Semiotic values ascribed to the Cyrillic script will be discussed in section 3, followed by the outcome of the empirical research on the current status of Cyrillic script in Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

2. Sociolinguistics of script

2.1. Concepts and research topics

Comprehensive research on writing and scripts within linguistics emerged only in the last thirty years, mostly due to the long-prevailing structuralist conception of language and script, according to which the script is only a secondary means of communication and external to language (Bunčić 2016b: 27f; Brehmer & Golubović 2010:7). From the mid-20th century on, script has been considered an equivalent and a complementary system of signs to the system of language (Derrida 1997). As a consequence, the writing system and in particular scripts are seen as a part of the linguistic system as a whole, which in turn has been defined as dynamic, including spoken and written forms equally.

Although the emergence of sociolinguistics in the 1960s had not at first resulted in considering written communication forms, it was this branch of linguistic studies that provided concepts, tools and topics for extensive research on writing, literacy, and script use as cultural and social practices. The basic research principle of sociolinguistics defined by Joshua Fishman for oral communication has been transferred into the study of script: “Who *writes* what content in which language in what script, on what medium and when?” (Pasch 2008:99). This very question yields the essential sociolinguistic variables that are under investigation:

participants both as individuals and group members, content, spatial and temporal elements in practice of writing on the one hand, and the relationship between particular language and script on the other.

The aforementioned variables are differently addressed within various sociolinguistic studies, since its object is notably interdisciplinary, concerning both theoretical and methodological frameworks. To mention just a few prominent strands: The German situated *Schriftlinguistik* enfolds sociolinguistic, cognitive and psycholinguistic research topics as well as diachronically and synchronically oriented approaches to the scripts and orthography (cf. Brehmer & Golubović 2010; Tomelleri & Kempgen 2015). In doing so, it is concerned with sociolinguistic concepts of standardization and normativity on the one hand, and the variation and change of orthography and scripts on the other. Furthermore, the intralinguistic properties of script systems such as script depth and its influence on literacy acquisition, the contact between various scripts and the issue of mutual relations between particular political and socio-cultural and linguistic factors are examined. Studying the use of script and orthography has increasingly become a matter of interest within the so called computer-mediated communication studies (CMC) that deals with “the interplay of technological, social, and contextual factors in the shaping of computer-mediated language practices, and the role of linguistic variability in the formation of social interaction and social identities on the Internet” (Androutsopoulos 2006: 421).⁴ Predominantly anglophone Literacy Studies or The New Literacy Studies have a strong focus on particular written texts and on the synchronic approach to concrete social practices around the text, drawing on methodological and theoretical frameworks based on linguistic ethnography (Gee 1999; Tusting 2013; Sebba 2012:9).

Despite theoretical and methodological differences, all mentioned approaches emphasize the dynamic relations between script and society, and in particular, script and communication respectively (Jaffe et al. 2012; Coulmas 2013; Lillis, T. & McKinney C. 2013; Ivković 2013, Brehmer 2015). In this context, based on its essential function to enable communication over a longer period of time and/or across delimited space⁵, the script has been assigned an attribute of a civilization marker, of social priority to (Stubbs 1980:30;

⁴ Interestingly, concerning Slavic languages and scripts and orthography in use within CMC we also find *Internet Slavia* as a special socio-cultural domain, alongside *Slavia orthodoxa* and *Slavia romana* (Ivković 2013: 338).

⁵ By delimited space we refer to both traditional written communication forms which have been passed on over time across different cultures and countries and to the communication practices taking place online (Ivković 2013; Androutsopoulos 2007; Brehmer 2015).

Daniels & Bright 1996:2, Stanišić 2002). Moreover, it is highlighted that within various communicative practices, script and writing “both index and constitute social hierarchies, identities and relationships” (Sebba 2012: 10) and are therefore significant factors of language policy and ideology. This can be stated especially in cases in which one language community uses two or more scripts. Across the world, this is not a negligible phenomenon, both in diachronic and synchronic perspectives (Bunčić 2016f:335ff).

The specific use of script relates to a certain self-localization, which in the public communication we are here focusing on always refers to the collective and not to individual identity. The concept of how group identity correlates with language is essential for understanding the relationship between language and society, and thus, it is one of the central concepts in sociolinguistics in general and sociolinguistics of script in particular. Peter Unseth has addressed this topic in one of the most influential papers on sociolinguistic parallels between choosing scripts and languages stating: “Just as a spoken language is a badge of a speech community’s identity, so too, a script is often an expression of a language community’s identity.” (Unseth 2005:20) The author points to the following factors in motivating both language and script choice: 1) identification with a group 2) distancing from another group 3) participation in development on a broader scale and 4) systemic linguistic factors (cf. *ibid.* 22). The first three factors incorporate clearly the semiotic values of a script, especially within communities using more than one script. We will revisit this in detail in the next section.

2.2. Terminology

Studies of writing and script have adopted not only standard sociolinguistic concepts based on the multilayered relationship between language, society, and communication respectively, but also particular terminology such as *diglossia*, *bilingualisms*, *code-switching*, and *speech community* and adjusted them to the specific object under investigation. This adjustment is, however, not always unproblematic since a systematically elaborated typological model suitable for numerous empirical case studies, (i.e. various scripts and script communities), has been developed only recently by Bunčić et al.⁶ The most ambiguous, and simultaneously most

⁶ In the foreword Bunčić explains in detail how this “collective monograph” came into existence: originally planned as a habilitation thesis and after a scientific conference dealing with this topic on international and interdisciplinary level, Bunčić and other authors decided not to publish the outcome as a formally edited volume, but actually as a collective monograph. Five out of six chapters were written solely by Bunčić, and for

used term within the scope of sociolinguistics of script has been *digraphia*, for which Daniel Bunčić attests to it having been “invented” six times independently (Bunčić 2016b:40). Drawing on the concept of *diglossia* – the use of two spoken varieties /languages in one speech community – *digraphia* seems at first glance to be sufficiently suitable to describe the use of two scripts in one language. The problem arises, however, from the notion of stratification in terms of the prestige of two spoken varieties, immanent to *diglossia*, which in turn is not granted in all empirically presented cases of *digraphia*. In order to solve this, the term *bigraphism* was introduced, which proved to be a non-standard-used term as well; Bunčić explains this in saying:

Both *digraphia* and *bigraphism* have been used both to describe only diglossia-like situations and to include other situations with two writing systems as well. *Digraphia* sometimes includes diachronic changes of writing systems, sometimes not. Writing systems consisting of several scripts (like the Japanese one) are sometimes included and sometimes excluded. Some also treat orthographic differences within the same script, some do not. (Bunčić 2016b:50)

If we consider that already a vast variety of theoretical and methodological frameworks have been used within the scope of the sociolinguistics of script, the previously mentioned issue of terminology is not trivial at all. Terminological variety can impede clarity in defining research design and thus the outcome of research, especially if, for example, different language communities using two or more scripts are being compared. Furthermore, it is apparent that differentiating the level of script and orthography is empirically indispensable.⁷ Therefore, this article will follow the typological model developed by Bunčić et al. and use its terminology according to which *digraphia* is the type of biscriptality⁸ in which scripts in use are in privative⁹ opposition, based on a diaphasic, diastratic, diamesic, or medial distribution (Bunčić 2016c: 62). Unlike these, *bigraphism* relates to situations in which the choice between two scripts is

the fourth, the longest chapter, consisting of case studies classified according to nine types of biscriptality from Slavic and non-Slavic languages, ten more authors were involved.

⁷ Although orthography has been defined as a more specialized term than the script, in many empirical studies this differentiation is not effectively implemented: see e.g. Ivković 2013: the author defines digraphia as the use of two scripts but at the same time analyzes the use of two or more orthographies of a single script (Latin) as cases of digraphia.

⁸ Biscriptality is used as a cover term to describe phenomenon of simultaneous use of more than one script for one language (Bunčić 2016: 51).

⁹ The term *privative* points to cases in which one member of the system is characterized by the presence of a marker, and the other by the absence of one (Ebd. 56).

based on numerous independent factors such as “the number of participants of the communication; the relationship among participants concerning age, education, sex, etc.; time and duration of the communicative act; the topic; the degree of publicity” (cf. *ibid.* 61) and others. Whereas in the case of digraphia we deal with functional (high vs. low) categorizations, in bigraphism no such categorization is possible, so that any text can be written in any script available in a language community (*ibid.* 63). Interestingly, the choice of the script in bigraphic circumstances is always governed by the indexical meaning ascribed to the script(s), (i.e. particular attitudes and values members of the script community assign to them) (Bender 2008; Bunčić 2016e: 325 ff., Karrebæk & Charalambous 2017:4). The third term on the sociolinguistic, paradigmatic axis that Bunčić introduces is *scriptal pluricentricity*, which describes script use based on diatopic, ethnic, or confessional distribution (Bunčić 2016c: 62).

If we apply this typology to the languages we are concerned with, we can conclude that the use of script in Serbia and Montenegro is currently referred to as bigraphism. Due to the prevailing opinion of the linguists that the language spoken in Serbia is still pluricentric, Bunčić also assigns Serbian to the category of scriptal pluricentrism (Bunčić 2016d: 167ff).¹⁰ The script situation in the Republic of Macedonia is particularly interesting since, although typologically monoscriptal, Macedonian is undergoing some important changes in language policy which also influence the use of script due to emerging bilingualism.

3. *Semiotic values of the Cyrillic script*

The dynamic development of scripts among the Slavs has been marked not only by linguistically motivated script change, that is, script reforms. Especially in the case of the alphabetical writing system, changes are seldom purely linguistic, as underlined by Unseth and other authors (Unseth 2005: 28; Wertheim 2012: 65). Script choice and change are often driven by ideological “script engineering” (Collin 2005:26, Bunčić 2016e: 326), sometimes even by the “script war”¹¹. Particularly, the extra-linguistic factors play an extremely important role in the development of the writings. As Mečkovskaja highlighted:

¹⁰ Bunčić et al. consider Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian and Montenegrin “to be national varieties of a single Serbo-Croatian language”, so that Montenegrin also accounts for scriptal pluricentricity (Bunčić 2016a: 25).

¹¹ By this term both concrete political conflicts caused by particular script use and metaphorically described actions for script protection are meant. The use of Cyrillic in Vukovar, Croatia accounts for the former case. Despite obligatory official use of both Latin and Cyrillic script defined by the national and local laws in Croatia, official signage on governmental buildings in Cyrillic script has been destroyed several times and many public protests against the use of the Cyrillic took place in the city arguing that Cyrillic script in Vukovar brings the war

As is well-known, the alphabet [...] has the maximal cultural-historical load of all linguistic phenomena. The script is a sign of the national-religious identity of a people and its orientations. (Mečkovskaja 1998:280)

These extra-linguistic factors have never been explored as a central topic of research on script (Golubović 2010:64) since they are not intrinsic features of the script as a part of the linguistic system. Nevertheless, they have been always noted and mostly referred to as indexical, drawing on the Peircean concept of indexicality to specify the "relationship between specific instances of language use and macrosociological categories" (Bender 2008: 91). Indeed, the particular value of the script unfolds by its use in a certain context, e.g. social situations. Here, the issue of identity is of the highest relevance. As very well elaborated by Brubaker and Cooper (2000), identity is a dynamic, constructed, negotiable social concept that comprises cognitive and affective connection between human beings, and particular topics and its content, aiming at positioning the Self and the Other. Identification may evolve across various markers such as gender, ethnic, religious, cultural and/or political affiliation. It involves both individuals and groups as members of a script community. Hereby, it is important to note that the identification process, with its instances of symbolic, emotional, cultural and ideological attributions is always situational and contextual, just as Brubaker and Cooper stated (*ibid.* 14). This can especially be observed in the case of the Cyrillic script.

Bunčić refers to all potential socio-cultural attributions to the script as its "semiotic value" (Bunčić 2016e:325). One of the inherent semiotic values of the Cyrillic alphabet for many Slavs who use it is, for example, "orthodox", which is linguistically as well as from a cultural-historical perspective, an incorrect reduction (Salamurović 2015:177). This semiotic value is based not only on the fact that the most numerous community of Cyrillic script users are orthodox Slavs but also on the circumstances surrounding the invention of the Cyrillic.¹² From the diachronic perspective, Cyrillic script has not only been seen as the genuine Slavic script within *Slavia orthodoxa* (Greenberg 2008: 42), but also in *Slavia romana*, as in the case

crimes from the 1990s back to people's minds. For the latter, see the campaign for the preservation of Cyrillic script in Macedonia in 2008 referred to as Битката за промоција и зачувување на македонскиот идентитет (Battle for promotion and preservation of Macedonian identity):

<http://www.time.mk/cw/6a432abae5/dodeka-pisuvam-na-kirilica-postojam.html>,

<http://www.utrinski.mk/default.asp?ItemID=4D8186B509DB2348945E980FB4AA64C2>, retrieved on 5 April 2017.

¹² Note that the same has been pointed out for the case of the Cherokee syllabary (Bender 2008:94).

of the 19th century Pan-Slavists (Bunčić 2016e: 325). Based on these and other examples, even beyond Cyrillic script it can be concluded that the most influential and prevalent semiotic values of the script are religion and/or national identity (Bunčić 2016e: 328; Spitzmüller & Bunčić 2016: 295; Jaffe 1999:216). Further related values ascribed to the script are those of traditionalism versus modernization. This refers especially to the situations when two scripts, such as Cyrillic and Latin in this case, are competing. As a recent example one can point to the empirical study on the public use of both scripts in Novi Sad conducted in 2011 (Stepanov, Zorica & Lovre 2011). The analysis showed that Cyrillic script is used on older buildings or objects containing domestic lexis or names typical for the region such as *Dragana*, *Zlatibor*, *Tara* etc. (ibid. 434). Moreover, leaflets advertising content perceived as traditional and associated with national culture are printed in Cyrillic: monastery tours, cultural manifestation Brankovo kolo etc. (ibid. 435). On the contrary, within the domain of the already mentioned computer-mediated communication the use of Latin script prevails (Ivković 2013: 336; Brehmer 2015: 67). Ideological attributions (capitalism vs. communism, liberalism vs. nationalism, West vs. East) also play a prominent role in the case of Cyrillic. Diachronically, the instances of alternating Cyrillization and Latinization in the former Soviet Union are probably the most prominent ones, since they affected even non-Slavic languages (Bunčić 2016e: 327; Wertheim 2012). In the history of the common Yugoslav state, ideological values were of utmost relevance for the script issue (Kretschmer 2010; Greenberg 2008). They prove to be vital even after the disintegration of the former common language area. Semiotic values of the scripts based on ideological and political views are not only part of the official language policy, but they are also present in metalinguistic comments of members of language and script community, as Ivković has demonstrated in his case study on alphabet choice in internet forums:

... digraphic practices in Serbian stir ideological and political debates, whereby the choices between the West and the East, the perception of progressive and conservative/retrograde politics, globalism and localism, urban spaces and the countryside become emblematic of script choice. (Ivković 2013:336)

We can therefore state that particular indexality proves to be a stable marker of the script, both in the top-down and bottom-up language policy. For these reasons, it seems inevitable to deal separately with the question of script and its semiotic values within sociolinguistics.

Within the scope of sociolinguistics of script, the Serbo-Croatian language area with its scripts is a paradigm example of biscriptality and its linguistic, cultural, and even political consequences. Within numerous studies about language and identity in successor states of former Yugoslavia, the most attention was given to the (non)distinction of morpho-syntactic and lexical levels of the linguistic system. Scripts are mostly treated as concomitant, that is, considered as an ethnic and religious differentiation marker between different, now independent states (Magner 2001, Greenberg 2008). This article, however, will primarily account for the peculiarities of Cyrillic and its current semiotic values among each language community in which Cyrillic has an official status. The aim of our analysis is to indicate the current status of the Cyrillic script, without taking an essentialist standpoint favoring one script or the other, but aspiring for a dialogue on this subject.

4. Some notes on analytical framework

As stated in the introduction of this paper, the analysis on the current status of Cyrillic script will encompass two different, although closely interweaved, levels. On the macro-level we will reflect on national legislation, state and political institutions as well as scientific institutions dealing with language policy and planning. They all have in common that they regulate language and script use in a normative sense. Despite the fact that the use of script is generally less regulated than the use of national language, and thus the script represents a linguistic resource which it is possible to deal more creatively with, “normative centres on a higher-scale level” (Karrebæk & Charalambous 2017: 5) still impact semiotic values of the script in use in order to steer identification processes within language and script communities (cf. Garrett 2010 on learning on attitudes). On the micro-level, media, the church, cultural facilities and script users will be considered since they typically implement the codified instructions of script use. Moreover, they also reflect and discuss the issue of language and script, as evident from various empirical studies, so that they can influence language policy from a bottom-up perspective.

In addition to the analysis of discursively visible participants, and thus more accessible contents on the issue of semiotic values of Cyrillic script (Garrett 2005: 1251), we conducted a survey among residents of three countries. The survey consists of two parts. The first part contains ten attitudinal statements with a binary “yes” / “no” response option. These

statements have been formulated on the basis of prevailing arguments about Cyrillic script among linguists, representatives of the political and cultural elite, and media. They were used for all three countries equally. The descriptive statistical analysis was undertaken on the data from the first part of the survey in the SPSS software for statistical analysis. The second part contains open questions about individual script usage in the public sphere and questions about general public script usage, such as on signage in company names, media, graffiti, and advertisements. It has to be noted that this survey is meant only to be a pilot study. Therefore, all results can be evaluated as tendencies, not as decisive and quantitatively representative data. Furthermore, some of the constraints in evaluating the outcome can be traced back not only to the chosen attitudes measurement tool (clear-cut stereotypical attitudes as outcome of yes/no questions), but also to the channel of enquiry: all data were collected online, so only those script users who had internet access were considered (the latter influenced the age variable considerably). All data were collected in the time frame from January to March 2014. The questionnaire was sent per email and social media in each national language and in randomly alternating Cyrillic and Latin script (for Montenegrin and Serbian). The findings of the survey can nevertheless display script attitudes from the bottom-up perspective which is not often taken into consideration within the research on script use. In doing so, they are perceived as a significant counterpart to the attitudes forming semiotic values on the macro-level, (i.e. from the top-down perspective).

5. Cyrillic script in monoscriptal Macedonia

5.1. Macro-level

Following the adopted terminology of scriptal typology, the Republic of North Macedonia is, as already indicated, monoscriptal. Since the Ohrid Framework Agreement from 2001, however, the issue of language **and** script use has become subject to increased regulations. Amendment V of the Agreement regulates questions of language and script use. According to this amendment, the Macedonian language, using its Cyrillic alphabet, is the official language throughout the Republic and in international relations. The bilingualism has become official after the Parliament adopted the Law on Language Use in March 2018 proclaiming Albanian a second official language, in addition to Macedonian, in the whole state. However, since the former president Ivanov refused to sign the bill, the Law on Language use had not entered

into force. Currently there are some amendments to be made in order the current president Pendarovski to be able to sign the bill.¹³ Furthermore, the Turkish, Roma and Serbian language with their scripts are used in official communication.¹⁴ In August 2008 the “Law on Use of the languages spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of Macedonia and the units of local self-government”¹⁵ was adopted. All other accompanying law regulations introduce multilingualism as an ideal situation, but in reality it is bilingualism since “the Albanian is at higher level in respect of other minority languages but at lower level than the Macedonian language” (Treneska-Deskoska & Spasov 2012: 42). This bilingualism doesn’t necessarily imply bigraphism (Bunčić 2016a:18ff). Nevertheless, in 2004 another important law was adopted: the “Law on the protection of Cultural heritage”¹⁶, which defines Macedonian language, its script (Art. 25) as well as toponyms (Art. 26), as spiritual cultural heritage which are in need of protection. Although mostly concomitant with the language issue, Cyrillic script is clearly treated as an integral part of official language policy which claims the endangerment of the language and script by highlighting the need for their protection. Needless to say, these actions of protection are socio-political in nature since they aim at strengthening the national and language identity of the Macedonian ethnic community under amended political, demographic and cultural conditions after 2001. In doing so, especially the semiotic value of script as national identity is foregrounded.

The discussions over official language and script were reinforced after the national-conservative government under VMRO-DPMNE¹⁷ was changed in May 2017, and the social-democratic party SDSM constituted the new government. Since September 2017 the Parliament has debated on the Proposal of the new Law on language use which constitutes Albanian and its Latin script as the second official language in use in Macedonia (Art. 1, paragraph 2).¹⁸ This Law also foresees some changes in public use of languages and scripts (Art. 7, paragraph 1):

¹³ <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-passes-albanian-language-law-01-11-2018>, retrieved 3 December 2018

¹⁴ <http://www.ucd.ie/ibis/filestore/Ohrid%20Framework%20Agreement.pdf>, retrieved on March 14, 2017.

¹⁵ <http://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/DE07B4F6DDFB948A0DFE2CFF240F02C.pdf>, retrieved on April 14, 2017.

¹⁶ http://www.kultura.gov.mk/documents/Zakon_za_zastita_na_kulturnoto_nasledstvo.pdf, retrieved on April 14, 2017.

¹⁷ VMRO-DPMNE is an acronym for The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity.

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<http://www.pravda.gov.mk/documents/Predlog%20Zakon%20za%20upotreba%20na%20jazicite%20so%20obr%20azlozenie%20%281%29.pdf>, retrieved on 23th October 2017. Interestingly, only in Article 1, paragraph 2, the

The names of the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as the names of all other institutions and their regional units on the local level in which at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language different than Macedonian language, and in Skopje, will be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic alphabet and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script, as well as in English. The names will be of the same size and font, with the name in Macedonian language and script being written first. (Translation A.S.)

Divergent standpoints can be substantiated by looking at the scientific institutions dealing with language policy and planning. Arguments which can be found in the publications of the Institute for Macedonian Language, “Krste Misirkov”, range from those that the Macedonian language is endangered (Ristovski 2006:11; Ilievski 2005:96ff.), that the (national) language has lost its primarily cohesive function (Gjurkova 2008), to those that argue that language issue has been highly politicized and that the bilingual and multilingual situation does not represent a threat to the Macedonian language and script (Spasov Lj. & Spasov A. & Arsov 2011:33) stating: “multiculturalism as a form of ethno-linguistic-religious model of cohabitation is our reality” (ibid.). Mostly, the script is implicitly referred to, except when the status of the language in the sense of prestige is mentioned, or in the context of analyzing script use in the public sphere (i.e. linguistic landscape). Due to the prestigious status of English, an interference with script has been observed to show that Macedonian has also been written in Latin script:

... the usage of Latin occurs parallel with Cyrillic, especially in half-translated English terms, in company names and the like, as for example in some advertisements: - Монитор со најбрз Response time во светот; - На лаунџање во Blue Lounge. (Gjurkova 2008:6)

Especially with respect to the commercial sector, e.g. with company names and in advertisements, the usage of Latin script was often documented. This is despite the Law on commercial institutions and companies that prescribes the usage of Cyrillic, either exclusively or with an accompanying minority language and its script (Art. 50).¹⁹ Here we can find

Albanian language is explicitly denominated; in all subsequent articles the denomination “official language other than Macedonian” and “language spoken by at least 20% of citizens” are used.

¹⁹ <http://www.mse.mk/Repository/UserFiles/File/Misev/Regulativa/ZTD/ZTD%2028-2004.pdf>, retrieved on April 14, 2017.

interesting script mixtures, as for example in advertisements for a beauty salon in Skopje that offers СПА Hedonist paket; Golden СПА пакет; but also СПА енерџи пакет, СПА чоколаден пакет etc. (Venovska- Antevska 2011:155).

This mixed use of Cyrillic and Latin script in Macedonia could be observed ever since the standardization of Macedonian. Victor Friedman showed in his work on the sociolinguistics of literary Macedonian from 1985 that the use of Latin for the Macedonian language can be traced back to “readier availability of Latin typewriters” in the phase of its standardization on the one hand, and the prestigious status of Serbo-Croatian, which had to be learned by all Macedonians, on the other (Friedman 1985:46ff.). The analysis of the public use of language and script in Bitola from 1977 (Božinovski 2000: 188ff.) gives us the most interesting examples of the strong influence of Serbo-Croatian during Yugoslav times. The author has diagnosed various types of the violation of script use covering the public displays and advertisements written in Latin, Latin and Cyrillic and Serbian Cyrillic: ZIK “PELAGONIJA” – Leben kvasac, Da se čuva na suvo i ladno mesto, “Gazela” – industrija za čevli i drugi proizvodi,²⁰; combining original company name and product designation: “Udarnik” – Фабрика за чорапи – Зрењанин, and signages only in Latin: Ohrid, Struga, Bitolj (cf. ibid. 196). Our own observations from 2012 confirm these findings, at least concerning the capital city Skopje:



Picture 1: Advertisement for a café in Skopje in the Čaršija district (photo taken by A.S.)

²⁰ Product designation.



Picture 2: Advertisement for a café in Skopje in the Centar district (photo taken by A.S.)

5.2. *Micro-level*

Nowadays, Latin script is being used especially in online media and internet communication. Within the survey about language attitudes, conducted by the Institute for Macedonian Language, among students of several faculties in Macedonia in 2013 on questions related to the use of script on the Internet (the question was “In the communication on the Internet which script do you use?”); from 171 students, 36% answered they use mostly Latin script, 8% mostly Cyrillic, and 31% Latin and Cyrillic. 25% said they use Cyrillic in official communication and Latin in unofficial (Gjurkova n/a).²¹

Based on these aforementioned results, it can be inferred that the Macedonian script community displays great tolerance towards different scripts due to late language standardization. Nevertheless, the official language policy is still influenced by the mindset typical for Romanticism, juxtaposing (national) language and script and national (ethnic) identity and endeavor to promote this standpoint in the public. This also explains the actions such as the campaign for the preservation of Cyrillic script under the slogan “As long as I write in Cyrillic, I will exist”²²:

²¹ These data points were communicated by the author of the survey Aleksandra Gjarkova per mail. The survey is a part of the project named “Language planning and language policies in the Republic of Macedonia: http://imj.ukim.edu.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=67%3A2009-08-18-09-28-29&catid=37%3A2009-08-18-08-31-53&Itemid=78, retrieved on April 17, 2017.

²² <http://vecer.mk/kultura/se-dodeka-pishuvame-na-kirilica-kje-postoime>, retrieved on February 8, 2014. The campaign was launched by the private media companies and media agencies with wide participation of many public persons and facilities.



Picture 3: Slogan of the campaign for the preservation of Cyrillic script

As Sebastian Kempgen has noted in his detailed analysis of this campaign (Kempgen 2019: 58), Cyrillic comes to the fore here as the national and not as a shared Slavic script.

As presented in section 4, we conducted our survey from January to March 2014 by sending the questionnaire via e-mail and social media. The total number of respondents was 16, among which only one respondent was with Albanian as their mother tongue. Six respondents were female, and ten were male. By age, the most respondents - eight- were in the age span between 20-30 years, whilst four were between 31 and 40. Two of them were older than 41, one older than 50 and one under 20. Regarding the level of education, the vast majority (eleven) have graduated from university with Master degree. Table 1 presents the results of the first part of the survey. Answers to both the first and third statements support historically attested tolerance toward various scripts. Only 50% of respondents think that Cyrillic is associated with Orthodoxy only, but 90% think Cyrillic is an important part of national identity and 100% think Cyrillic is a part of European cultural heritage. Although a traditional value is attributed to Cyrillic, this script is found to be modern at the same time. Alongside this, most respondents do not think that Cyrillic is endangered. However, the variable of age could account for this attitude since the most numerous age group in the sample was that of 20-30 years old respondents.

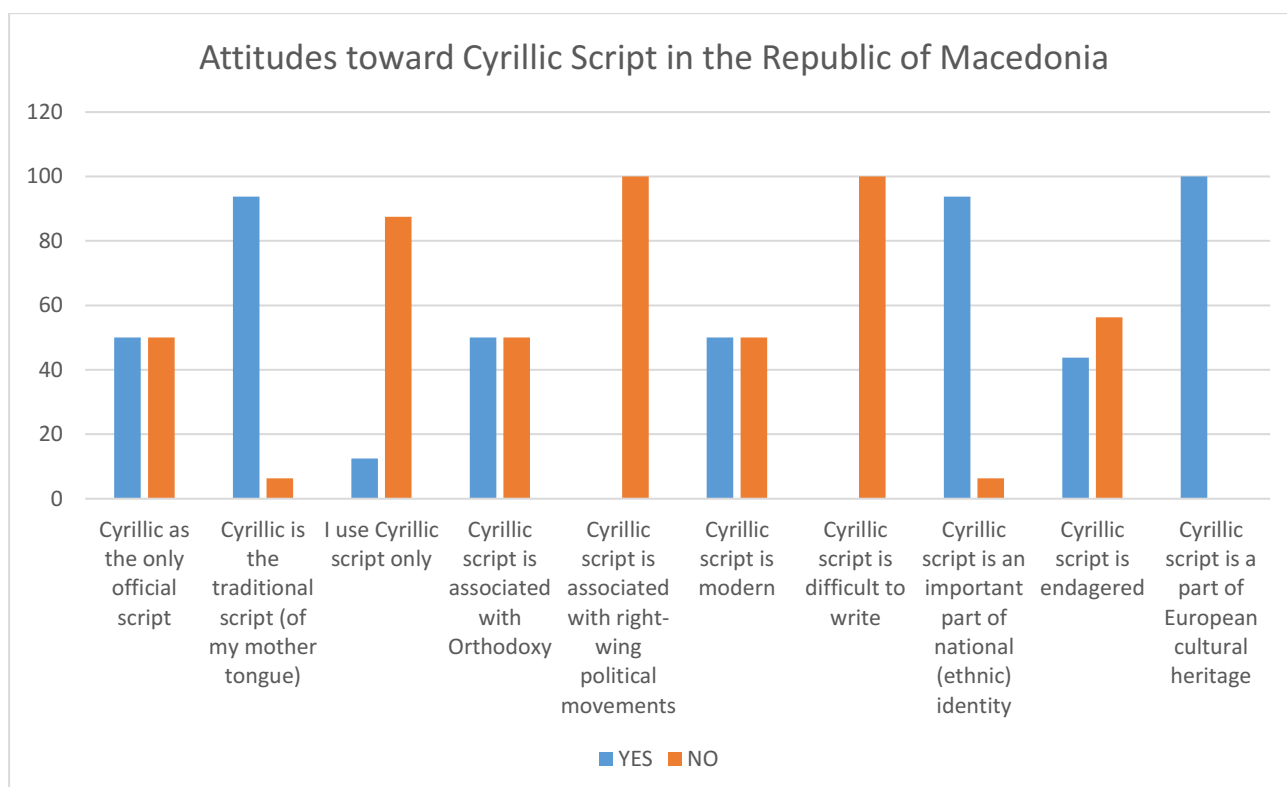


Table 1

When asked about the private and public use of script, most respondents stated that besides the media, Cyrillic and Latin scripts are used in all fields (Tab. 2):

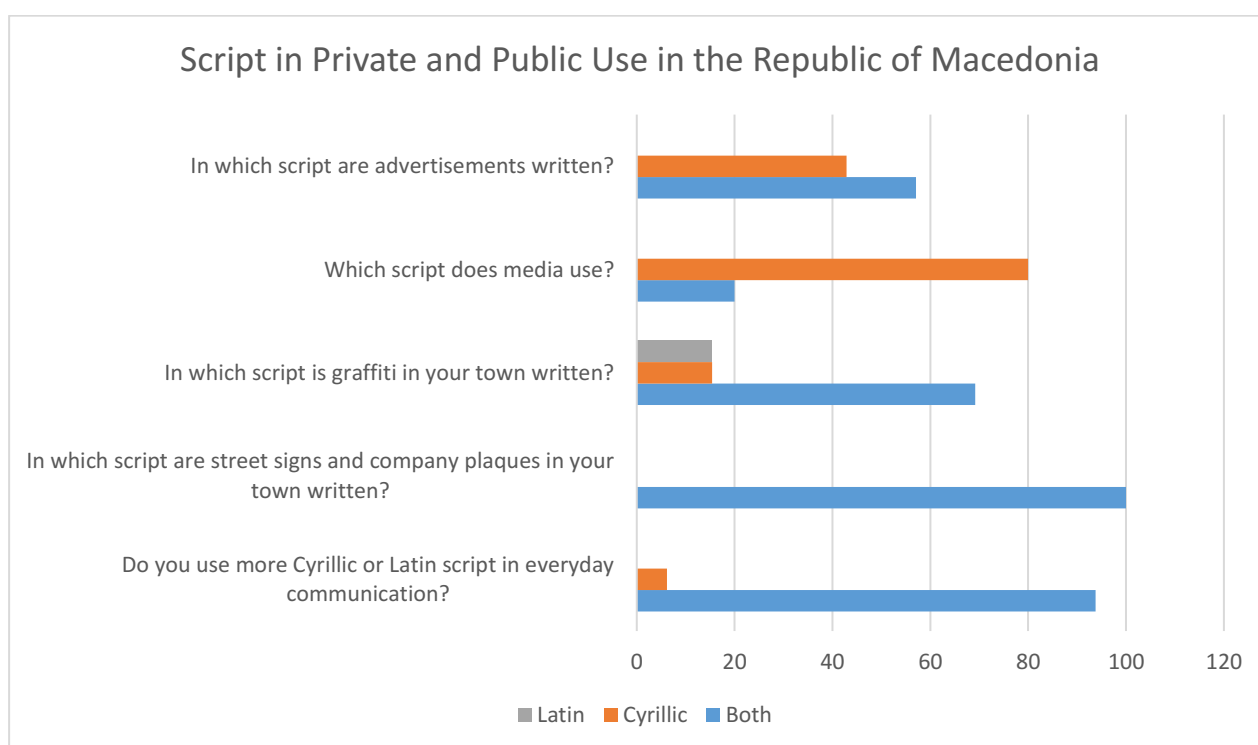


Table 2

When asked if they use Latin script for a particular reason, eight respondents said that they do so because of international communication, specifically, when they write in foreign languages, for example in internet communication, even when they write in Macedonian. Furthermore, as free items we could find the following opinions of some interviewees: “Latin script has been used because since 2001, Albanian is somehow an official language too; another reason could be to make international trade more successful for Macedonia”; “Latin script has been more used on the internet”, “Latin script should be used to enable foreign visitors to understand what is written”. However, there are also some comments underlining once more the emotional and cultural attachment to Cyrillic script for Macedonians: “Cyrillic script should be used more often”, “Cyrillic should be an official, national script”; “I like to see things written in Cyrillic”.

To summarize: even though the Macedonian language is monoscriptal, functional²³ code-switching in script use can be observed. The main motivation for that is, to refer to the cited work of Peter Unseth about parallels between choosing scripts and languages, a wish to participate in developments on a broader scale (2005:27). Nevertheless, this factor cannot outweigh other more emotive factors such as national, historical and cultural affiliations of the Cyrillic script. In addition, the observed tolerance toward Latin script is not a direct consequence of constitutional and changes in language policy after 2001. Rather, it is a concomitant attitude of Macedonians toward their language and script since the standardization of the language after the Second World War.²⁴

6. *Montenegro - Two languages, two scripts?*

6.1. *Macro-level*

Montenegro is the only successor state of the former Yugoslavia which officially clings to the Yugoslav tradition, declaring that “the Cyrillic and Latin alphabet are equal” (Art. 13 of the Constitution from 2007).²⁵ Since the declaration of independence in 2006, a number of

²³ Not in the sense of digraphia but in the sense of communicative pragmatics.

²⁴ According to a survey conducted in 1988 about multilingualism in Yugoslavia, 60 % of respondents who had Macedonian as their mother tongue answered that Serbo-Croatian should be the only official language in Yugoslavia. Ljiljana Minova-Gjurkova, *Za bilingvizmot I okolu njego. Makedoncite za svojot jazik vo jugoslovenskata povekejazična zaednica*. In: *Literaturen zbor*, 1-2, 1989.

²⁵ <http://www.skupstina.me/images/dokumenti/ustav-crne-gore.pdf>, retrieved on April 20, 2017.

language political measures were taken in order to re-standardize the official language (Glušica 2011). However, the matter of the script is only minor in our sense. That is, re-standardization of Montenegrin enfolds merely orthography and grammatical forms. Two new phonemes and graphemes are introduced both in Cyrillic and Latin script: *ś/ć* (IPA: ɕ) and *ž/ž* (IPA: ʒ), based on dialectal speech forms and Jekavian iotized forms (cf. *ibid.* 17f.). Unlike in Macedonia or Serbia, no other law regulations deal separately with the script use of the official Montenegrin language. The scientific institutions in Montenegro - Matica crnogorska and the Institute for Montenegrin Language and Literature in Cetinje - discuss in their publications the official status of Montenegrin in order to legitimize the new state, using the linguistic system only as a vehicle for underpinning political and national identity (i.a. Perović 2011: 9; Radojević 2011:41). Some assumptions about the use of Latin script in the earliest period of Montenegrin history - the Doclea period from the mid- 9th to the 13th century - can be found in the publications of the Institute for Montenegrin Language, although they are not scientifically proved, on the contrary (Čirgić 2011:26f.). Since in the educational system both scripts are taught, starting with Cyrillic in the 2nd grade, one can conclude that the Montenegrin is an ideal example of bigraphism. Interestingly, although the official language policy is not directly concerned with two scripts, more positive attitudes towards Latin script have been observed and interpreted as “a need to differentiate Montenegrin from Serbian language” (Nakazawa 2015:134). The differentiation between Montenegrin and Serbian in the symbolic sense seems to be the central one:

In Montenegro, language identity is still fluctuating because the number of people that claim to be Montenegrin is larger than the number of people that claim to speak Montenegrin. What is more, the number of people claiming to speak Serbian is larger than the number of people claiming to speak Montenegrin. On the other hand, the Montenegrin language identity is “strengthened” at a symbolic level by introducing two new phonemes/letters.” (Felberg Radanović & Šarić 2013:29)

Taking into account the aforementioned, Nakazawa has accurately defined Montenegrin language ideology as promoting nationalism and internationalism at the same time (Nakazawa 2015: 133). Especially, the latter influences both public and individual usage of the script in Montenegro.

6.2. Micro-level

On the micro-level, we can observe the preponderance of the use of Latin script. Especially in the linguistic landscape, that is, street signages, company names, and the like, Latin script is used more than Cyrillic (Gröschel 2009: 309; Nakazawa 2015:134). Regarding the media, even the previously state-founded, now privatized newspaper *Pobjeda* switched from Cyrillic into Latin after 2010. In his explanation, the editor-in-chief pointed towards the following reasons for this script-shift: young readers prefer Latin; it makes the newspaper more accessible to the readers who belong to minorities; and, finally, there are technical and economic reasons for the change (Felberg Radanović 2012:108). Here one can clearly observe the semiotic value of modernization ascribed to the Latin script, (i.e. implied traditionalism as a value of Cyrillic). Only the daily *Dan* is still printed in Cyrillic (with an online version in Latin). It is therefore perceived as a promoter of Serbian identity:



Picture 4: Layout of the daily *Dan* on April 21, 2017

In the religious and sacred discourse which applies within the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Cyrillic script has not only the priority, but in fact is the only script which is allowed (Končarević 2010: 105). According to Končarević, this is not only due to the loyalty to the tradition, but even more due to the confrontation with the ideology (i.e. communism) which introduced the equality of the Cyrillic and Latin script (ibid. 110). The Metropolitanate of Montenegro and the Littoral as a part of the Serbian Orthodox Church not only stands in for the exclusive use of Cyrillic script, but also actively promotes the idea that in Montenegro, Serbian language and its script, (i.e. Cyrillic) should be used. The internet presence of the Metropolitanate introduces, inter alia, the topic “Language” under the item “Society”²⁶ and advocates here the Serbian language and the Cyrillic script as the only valid means for the language and speech community in Montenegro. Primarily, the value of national identity is ascribed to Cyrillic script, so that book promotions, activities of various non-governmental organizations, interviews with Serbian linguists and scientists from northern Montenegro on the interlinkage between identity and the script are presented. In this vein, the Metropolitanate of Montenegro plays an important role of contesting the official language policy, including the script use, especially since the newly proclaimed and officially not acknowledged Montenegrin Church uses both Cyrillic and Latin.²⁷

There were seventeen respondents taking part in the survey from Montenegro, eleven were female and six were male. Similar to the Macedonian case, more than half were in the age span between 20 and 30 years old and have graduated from university. In this survey there was not one respondent stating that he/she uses Cyrillic script exclusively or wants Cyrillic to be the only official script. More than 90% of respondents write more in Latin, and the perception of the script use in public is also in favor of Latin script. At the same time, over 70% respondents think that Cyrillic is endangered and over 60% that the Cyrillic script is an important part of national identity (Tab. 3):

²⁶ <http://www.mitropolija.com/category/drustvo/jezik/>, retrieved on April 20, 2017.

²⁷ <http://www.cpc.org.me/mne/>, retrieved on April 20, 2017.

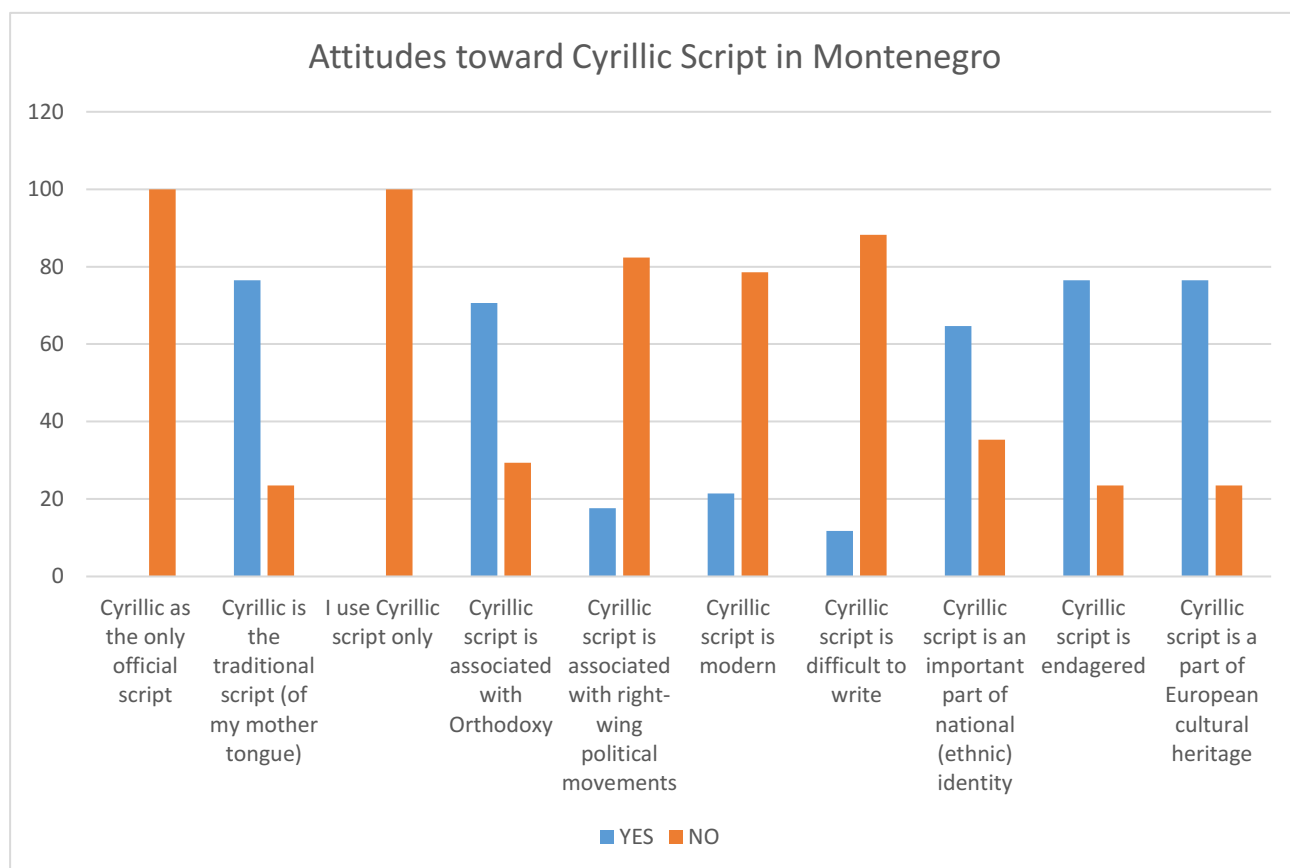


Table 3

Based on the last mentioned finding, we have looked at the cross-table comparing the variable of the attitude in question (horizontal axis) and the variable of language indicated to be the mother tongue (vertical axis) (Tab. 4).

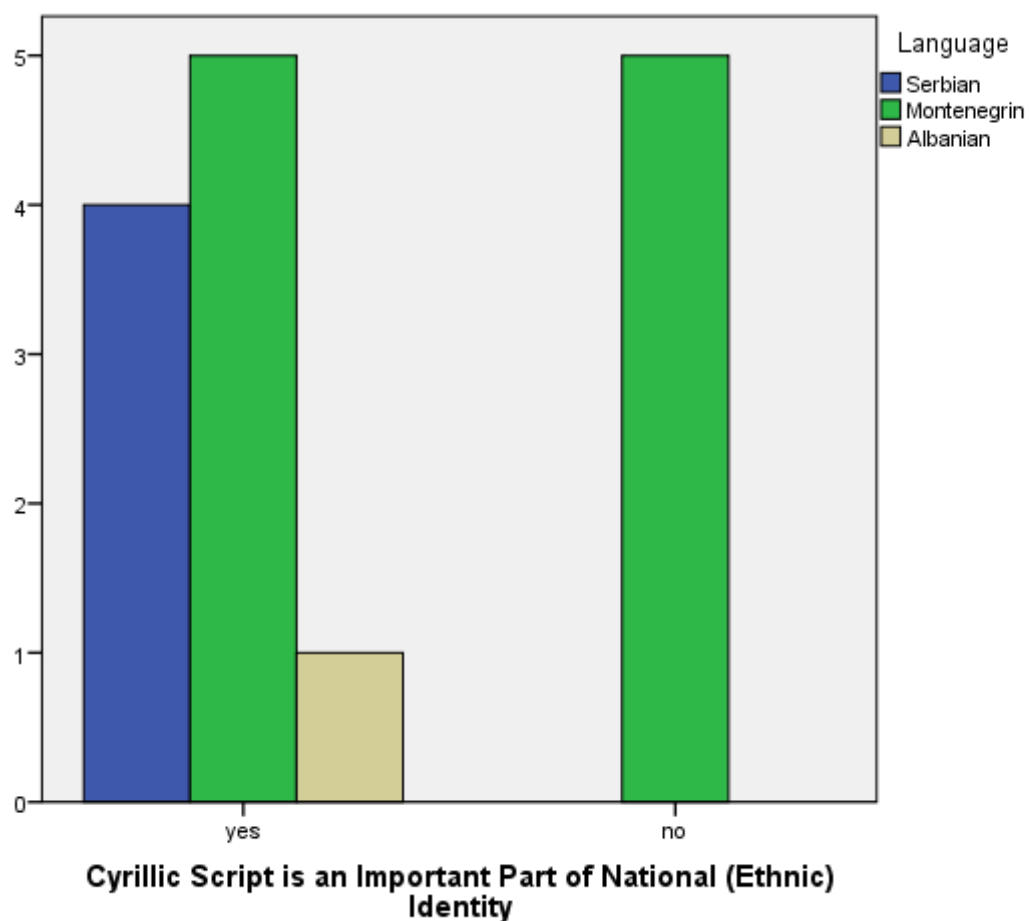


Table 4

Additionally, the cross-table between the opinion that Cyrillic is the traditional script and the variable of mother tongue has been calculated (Tab. 5).

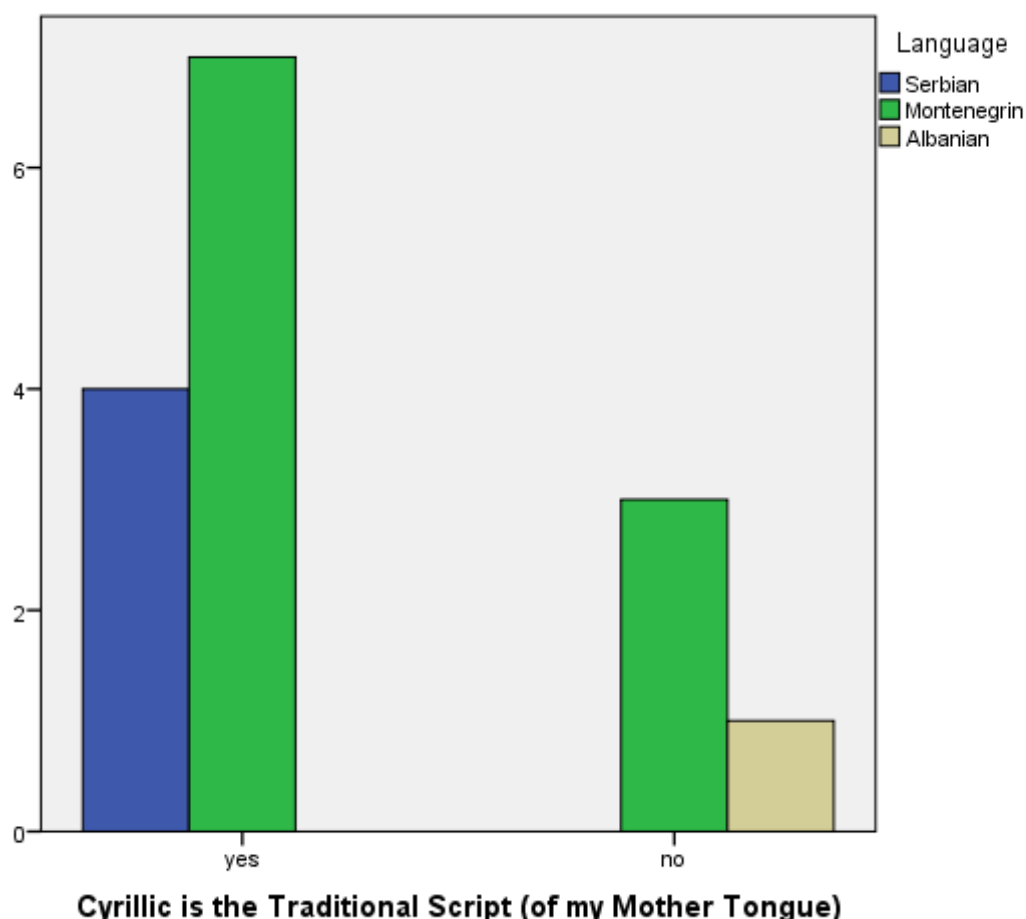


Table 5

We can conclude that Cyrillic is associated also with the Montenegrin language to a great extent, so that Cyrillic is not perceived as a differentiation marker within the language identity. Nevertheless, we could also find opinions such as “I hope Cyrillic script will not be banned from obligatory use at school”, “Cyrillic has been avoided in Montenegro on purpose”, “It is true that many people in Montenegro think Cyrillic is a very important feature of national identity and because of that they either tendentiously use it or they avoid it on purpose” or “Pro-Serbian media mostly use the Cyrillic script”. The respondents have also noted the preponderance of Latin regarding the private and public use of the script (Tab. 6). When asked why they prefer Latin script, the majority stated it is out of habit or for practical reasons such as foreign languages or occupation. Some of the respondents share this pragmatic view on the Cyrillic script also, stating that “Both scripts should be equally available and everybody should decide how they feel and which script they want to use” or “I use Cyrillic in order to help my children at school, otherwise I always choose Latin”.

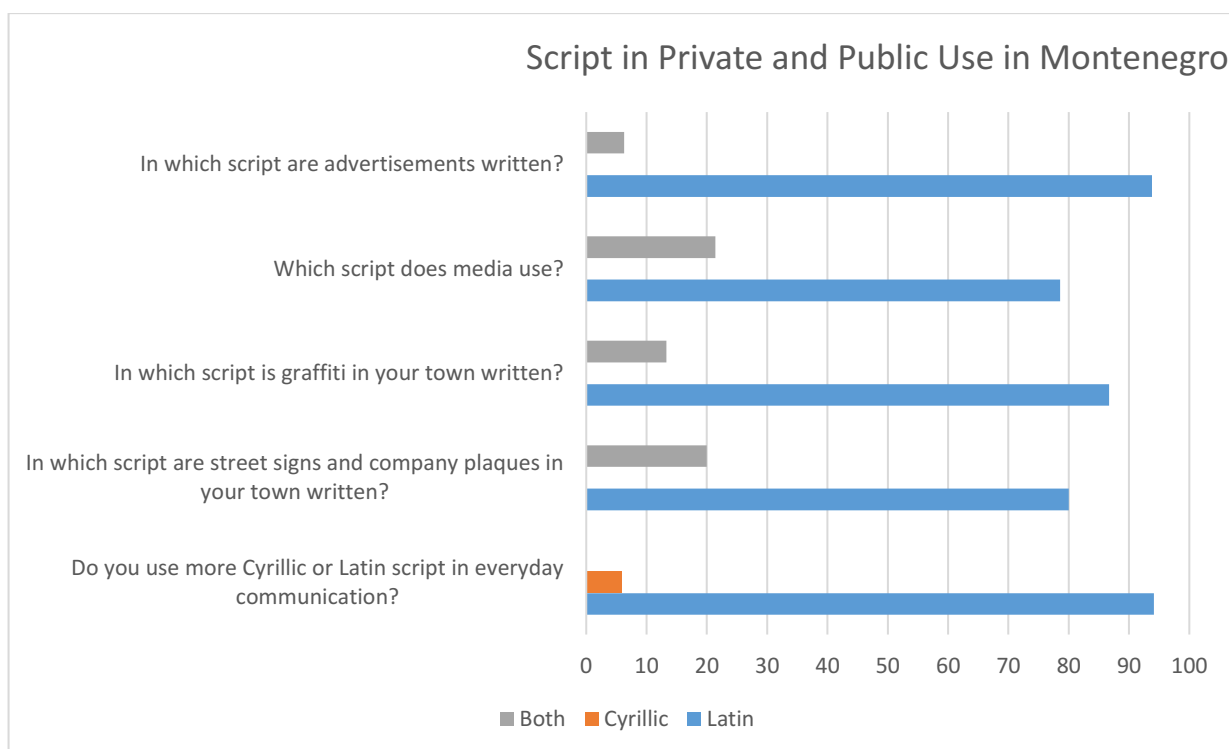


Table 6

We can conclude that there is no significant change in the semiotic values of Cyrillic script in Montenegro after independence. One of the reasons could be that there is an identification link between Cyrillic script and Montenegrin as the new official language. Another one is that the symbolic struggle over identification and power is carried out within the speech and not the script community since the significant symbolic difference is made between those who state that Montenegrin or Serbian is their mother tongue. However, there is a certain disparity between the official language policy that argues for the equality of the two scripts and the actual script usage which goes in favor of the Latin script.

7. Serbia: To be or not to be

7.1. Macro-level

According to the current constitution of the Republic of Serbia, from 2006, the Serbian language and its Cyrillic script are in official use; the official use of other languages and scripts is determined by other laws. Thus, whilst the use of the Cyrillic alphabet is mandatory, the use

of the Latin script is optional. The Law on the official²⁸ use of languages and scripts from 2010 foresees that signage and other documents (company and organization names, official announcements) can either be written in Cyrillic or Latin. However, if the text is written in Latin script, then this can only follow the text in Cyrillic, placed below or to the right of the Cyrillic text (Art.10).²⁹ In practice, this is mostly disregarded. Neither the constitution nor the relevant laws set the script use in the public sphere, such as the school system, publishing and the media, or cultural, political and economic institutions of any kind. In the public sphere potential diasituative factors play a major role. This is also fertile ground for the development of all sorts of semiotic values related to the Cyrillic alphabet. Especially within media and among the cultural and political elite, the matter of script has been highly polarized, even before the nationally-oriented government and the president from Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) were elected in 2012. To provide just one example regarding the debate mentioned at the beginning of this paper, script use in Novi Sad: Slobodan Antić, a sociology professor at the University of Belgrade and political analyst known for his conservative - national political positions, stated that those who prefer Latin are so called EU-Serbs because they "... suffer as soon as they see each Ф or Ж, Ш or Ъ - those awful letters that resemble lanterns, frogs or fences of Slavic peasants and warriors" (Antić 2007).

Until recently the official language policy had been of the view that Cyrillic is not endangered and that bigraphism in the Serbian language is historically even older than the so called "Yugoslav era", which can be traced back to the linguistic work of Aleksandar Belić after the First World War (Belić 2010:12; Stojanović 2012:191).³⁰ At the end of 2013 a new, normative grammar of the Serbian language was published by Predrag Piper and Ivan Klajn. In the section about scripts they denominated Cyrillic as a script of **Serbian** and Latin as a script of **Serbo-Croatian** language:

²⁸ This Law uses the notion *official* (Serbian: službeni) and *public* (Serbian: javni) as synonyms, although these two domains are not equal (cf. Bugarski 1995:70). Currently, the Ministry of Culture and Information is preparing the amendments of the law in order to define all domains of the official use of language and script: cf.

http://www.danas.rs/drustvo.55.html?news_id=348531&title=%C4%86irilica+slu%C5%BEbeno%2C+latinica+po mo%C4%87no+pismo. Retrieved on October 26, 2017.

²⁹ http://www.paragraf.rs/propisi/zakon_o_sluzbenoj_upotrebi_jezika_i_pisama.html Art. 10, from 25.01.2014; The use of minority languages and fonts will be granted further wherever the corresponding minority group represents at least 15 % of the total population. Retrieved on April 20, 2017.

³⁰ Vienna Literary Agreement was also written in Latin script, s. Greenberg 2008: 185.

The traditional script of the Serbian language is the Serbian Cyrillic.....After the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918), and later the Yugoslav state, the use of the Latin alphabet in Serbia and Montenegro suddenly began to expand. The suppression of the Cyrillic alphabet in favor of the Latin continued during the following years. ... At present, both the Serbian Cyrillic (less common) as well as the Serbo-Croatian Latin (more common) are being used in the public sphere. Considering the importance of Cyrillic for the Serbian cultural identity, its suppression from public use is harmful for the safeguarding and development of that identity. Due to this fact this process must be stopped and Cyrillic should be granted the place that it traditionally deserves within the Serbian culture. (Piper & Klajn 2013:17) (Translation A.S.)

This is the first time that language policy-makers have made a clear distinction between Serbian and a former state language. Moreover, it is also the first time script was used as a key distinguishing feature. Interestingly, from the circle of the linguists who were pursuing the integrative language policy tradition of Aleksandar Belić, only Ranko Bugarski still advocates the equivalence of the two scripts in the language policy and planning, primarily due to the circumstances of language reality:

Based on the aforementioned the greatest discrepancy between the officially proclaimed language policy and current language reality can be noticed within the realm of the scripts in the Serbian language. (Bugarski 2013: 93) (Translation A.S.)

Moreover, he ascribes nationalism to the Serbian language because of the issue of the script, which differentiates this one from the language nationalisms within the Croatian, Bosnian and Montenegrin languages (cf. *ibid.* 95). The intensive debates on the Cyrillic in Serbia were provoked, *inter alia*, by the "Ћирилица" association, which was founded in 2001 and is composed primarily of the linguists but also of many non-linguists who are committed to the protection of the Cyrillic.³¹ They aim to enforce the Cyrillic script in official and public use as the only script in Serbia. In doing so, they associate the script primarily with the national identity.³² Although they are designated as "linguistic amateurs" by the leading Serbian linguists such as Ranko Bugarski, Ivan Klajn and Mato Pižurica, they still participate in the

³¹ <http://www.cirilica-beograd.rs/%D1%83%D0%B4%D1%80%D1%83%D0%B6%D0%B5%D1%9A%D0%B5>, retrieved on April 24, 2017.

³² "Cyrillic script is, together with religion and language, the third pillar of the Serbian national identity", see description of the Association on the website.

official policy-maker discourse on language and scripts issues, mostly due to the support of media (cf. *ibid.*).

7.2. *Micro-level*

The relations between the semiotic values of the Cyrillic and media, cultural facilities and Serbian Orthodox Church were already discussed elsewhere in more detail (Salamurović 2015). Generally, we can observe that when the script is a topic in the media or at some cultural events, national and cultural identity are first and foremost semiotic values to be underlined. Furthermore, traditionalism and ideological attributions (anti-communist orientation) play a significant role. Particularly prominent in the Serbian script community is the attribution of both East and West affiliation (Serbia as the East of the Western world and the West of the Eastern world), which politically has been increasingly misused since 2012.

In section 3 we have already mentioned one survey conducted in multicultural and multilingual Novi Sad in relation to the issue of script(s) (Stepanov & Zorica & Lovre 2011). One of the important findings of this study was that the frequently cited perception of the negligence of the Cyrillic script and its threatened status could not be proved, despite the fact that the Latin script prevails in public use (*ibid.* 436). Among respondents, Latin was perceived, *inter alia*, as an expression of a multiethnic environment, whilst Cyrillic, on the other hand, was associated with nationally connoted (i.e. negative) content such as graffiti with "4 S"³³ or with such contents that propagates national and religious hatred (*ibid.* 419).

The survey has shown that the script users in Serbia show high tolerance toward other scripts (1. and 3. statements), which only confirms an already existing discrepancy between official language policy and script use (Tab. 7). However, a very high correspondence to the attitudes "Cyrillic is the traditional script of my mother tongue" and "Cyrillic is an important part of national identity" has been noted. In addition, Cyrillic has been seen as a part of the European cultural heritage by more than 90% of respondents, so it can be concluded that the distinction between Cyrillic and Latin by affiliation to the tradition, East and Orthodoxy as opposed to the West is not the most relevant one, as is presented in the media and some cultural institutions.³⁴ Most of the respondents think that in the public both scripts are equally

³³ Four S stands for "Only unity saves the Serb" (Serb. *Samo sloga Srbina spašava*). This phrase is an interpretation of what is taken to be four Cyrillic letters for "S" ("C") on the Serbian coat of arms and flag. The motto is associated with national and even nationalistic ideological orientations.

³⁴ S. i.e. Association "Ćirilica" who think suppression of Cyrillic means abandoning the cultural circle of Slavia Orthodoxa.

used. In the private usage, though, they mostly choose Latin script (Tab. 8). Latin script in Serbia is, like in Macedonia, also associated with greater accessibility to other script communities. In addition, especially in Vojvodina, Latin alphabet has been linked to cultural pluralism as a positive value (free items in the survey). In the Serbian case there were 22 respondents, out of which fifteen were female and seven male. More than half were between 31 and 40 years old and had graduated from university. Five respondents were in the age span between 20 and 30 years of age and two over 40. There also were five respondents that had graduated at a high school level. The vast majority were from the capital city.

It is interesting to take a look at the cross-table concerning the usage of the script and the attitude about Cyrillic being endangered (Tab. 9). Most of those who have stated that they use more Latin than Cyrillic (vertical axis) think that the latter is endangered (horizontal axis). It may be posited that on the level of individual script usage different factors play a role than on the level of group attitudes on the script, which influence the social and cultural identification processes. That would furthermore prove impacts from higher-level- agents of language and script policy, (i.e. their current societal force in Serbian script community).

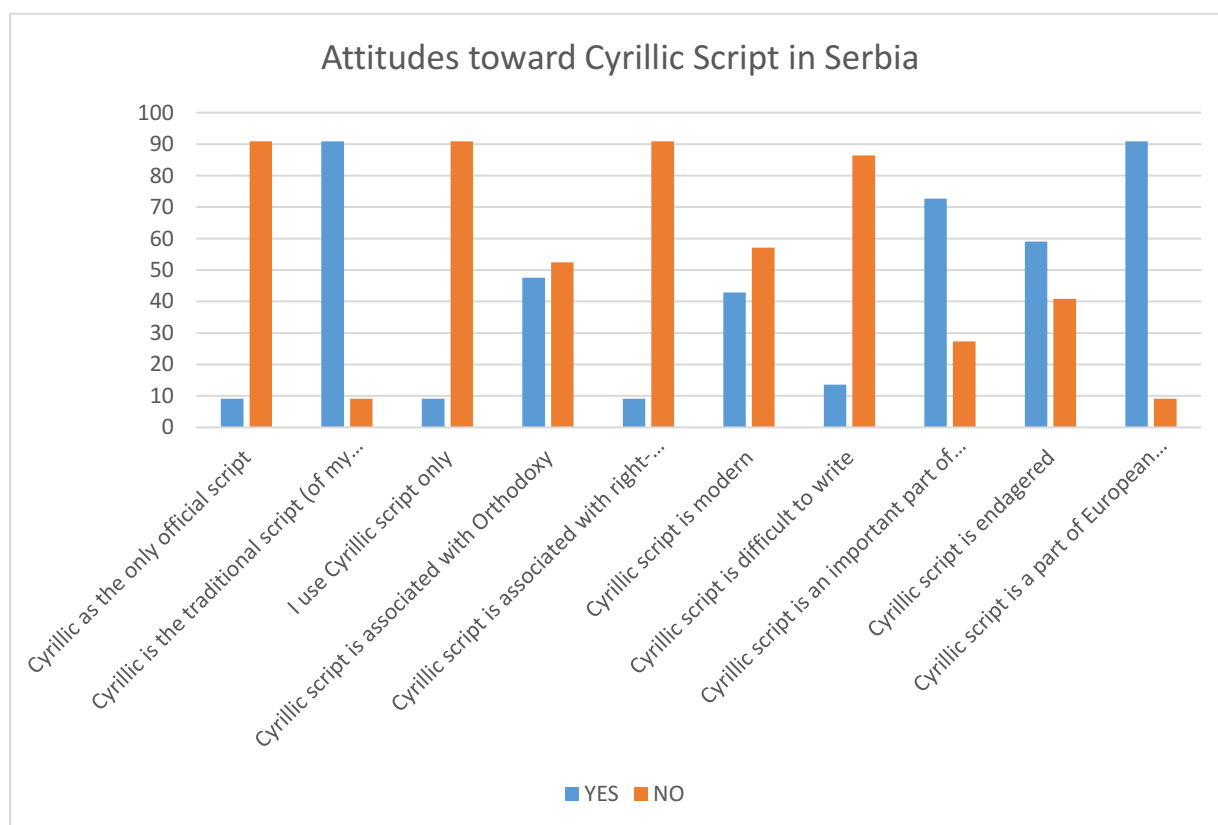


Table 7

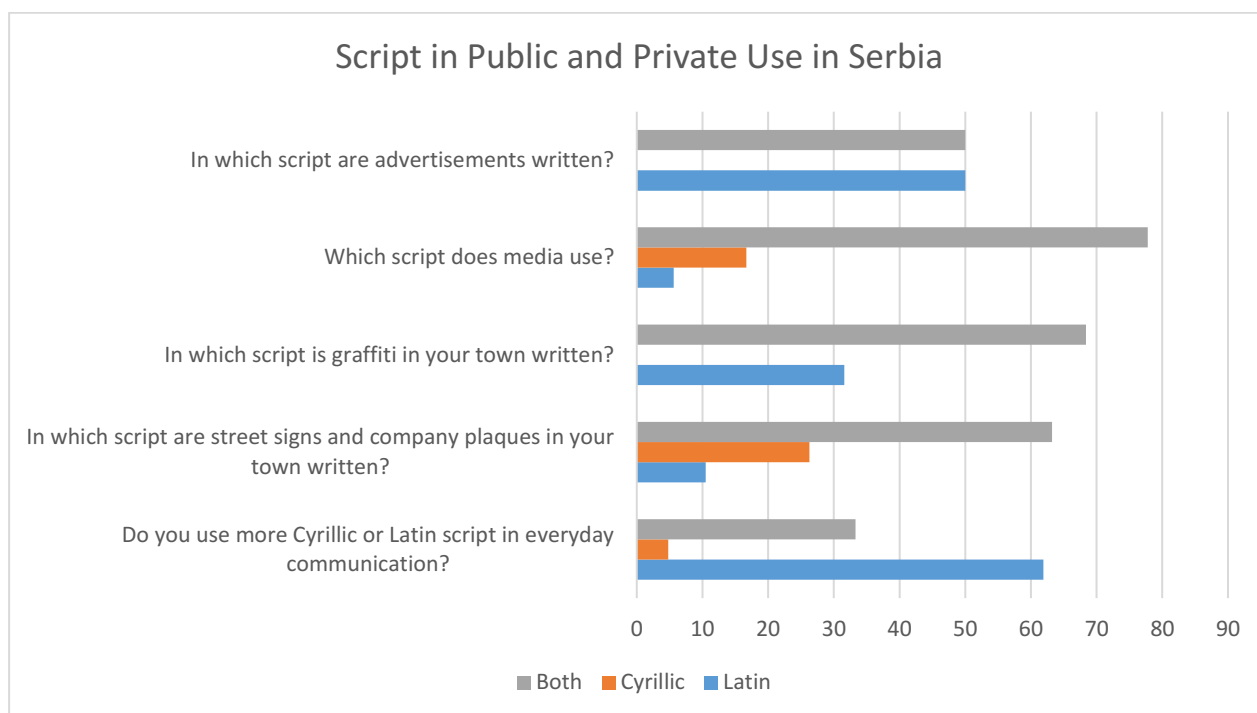


Table 8

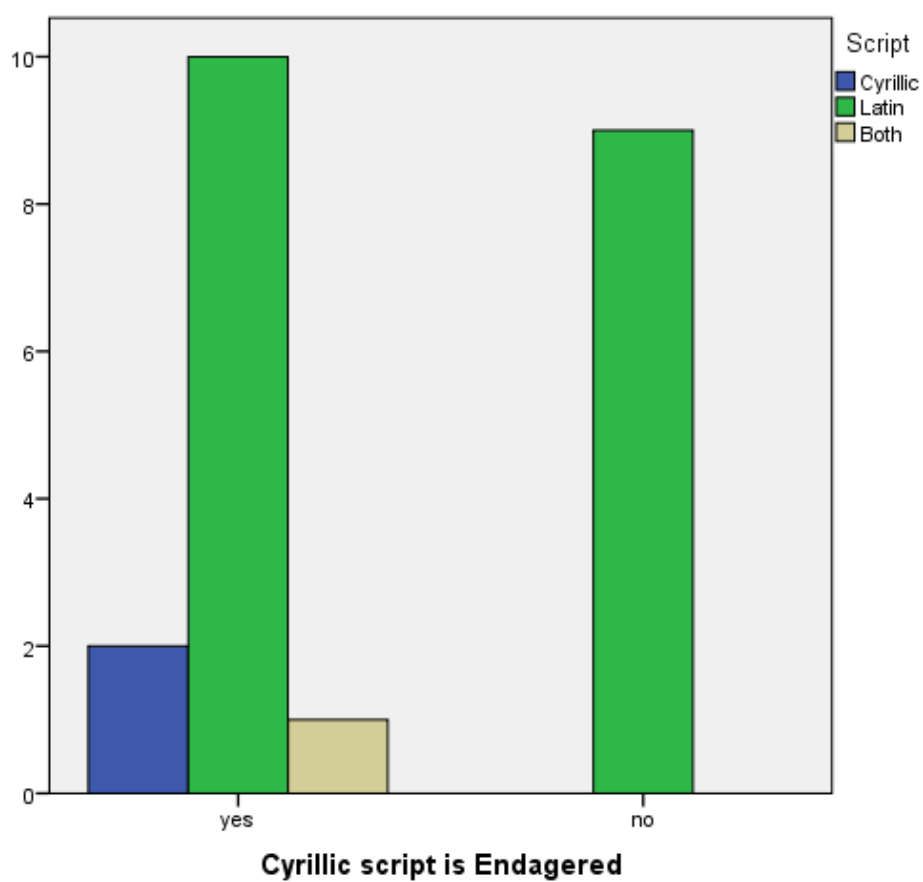


Table 9

8. Conclusion

To return to the original question, the current status of the Cyrillic script in all three countries has been determined by its strong affiliation with tradition and national identity, both among those who actively use it, as well as among those who prefer the Latin script. At the same time, a high acceptance of other scripts could be confirmed among script users, which has not changed since 2000. Language policy makers, in contrast, show a tendency to introduce clearer differentiations. This has been supported by politicians, cultural agents and media who often spread the idea about the endangerment of scripts. For these reasons, it seems inevitable to deal separately with the question of script and its semiotic values within sociolinguistics. In this way, potential changes and tendencies toward a shift of scripts can be identified at an early stage. At the same time, extreme demands and claims about a “script nationalism” (Bunčić 2016f:232) can be prevented on the basis of empirical evidence.

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